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AUTHOR Valentine, Carole J.
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ABSTRACT

An "authentic dialogue" is presented consisting of two case studies that describe how a process learning teacher became a co-learner with her students through the teaching method of natural learning. Two middle school students, a 13-year-old boy named Josh who dashes off his assignments with whirlwind nonchalance and a fourth-grade girl named Holly who is very serious about learning, met with the teacher from 8:15 to 9:30 in the evening over a 2-week period. The model the students were exposed to involved 2 hours, from the rehearsal-for-writing stage to final evaluation for Holly and 1.5 hours for Josh and could easily be adapted to the classroom environment. The boy responded very well to the stimulus of the isolated tutoring project, and the teacher found no specific areas of the writing process about which the boy needed to know more. Given time and sensitive teachers, the young girl showed the potential to blossom as a writer. (RS)

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UNLEASHING THE TURKEY TETRAZZINI IN STUDENT WRITING:

A FUNCTIONAL PARADIGM FOR TEACHING PROCESS WRITING IN A NATURAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT WITH MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

CAROLE J. VALENTINE

ENGLISH EDUCATOR and PROCESS WRITING MASTERS STUDENT

SUBJECT: TEACHING PROCESS WRITING

21 Edwards Street
Laconia, New Hampshire 03246

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UNLEASHING THE TURKEY TETRAZZINI IN STUDENT WRITING

Josh and Holly volunteered to assist me in my writing study of teaching process writing in a natural learning environment to middle school students. I specifically chose these students because of the contrast in their writing process experience and the marked difference in their dedication to school work.

The following is an authentic dialogue of how I, as a process learning teacher, become a co-learner with my students and facilitate their internalization of the process of writing for themselves through the teaching method of natural learning.

Josh brought to this study a challenge not to bore him with the repetition of his everyday classroom experiences in his seventh grade Reading/Writing Process English class. I had to make sure I was bringing to him a refreshing new twist to the everyday routine of his Writer's Workshop with my own personal flavor different from that of his skilled Master teacher's approach.

To add to the difficulty of my task, Josh, his teacher informed me, is a 13 year old who dashes off his assignments with whirlwind nonchalance to be free to socialize with his friends. I fortunately struck upon an approach that was sufficiently unique from his teacher's to pique and sustain the interest of a yawning 13 year old at the least conducive hours for productivity: 8:15 to 9:30 p.m. a total of two evenings, spanning a two week period.

Exploring Interests and Rehearsal for Writing

The first day of our process writing project I began with an Interest Inventory borrowed from Maureen White to ascertain vital background information about just what was important to this private boy, Josh, with whom I had shared, on occasion, only minimal small talk when I was paying him for delivering our paper. Josh's inventory answers certainly provided me with valuable clues to Josh's interest in sports and his innate desire to a cut-up as well as an achiever, countered by his fear of the intimidation of authority figures such as teachers. I immediately recognized that I wanted to refrain from being any intimidating authority figure for Josh and develop my relationship as a friend and a writer to facilitate fully his blossoming beyond his classroom writing in this writing project. From Josh's interest inventory, I had deduced quickly that I needed to include both a personal weakness and a sport on my topics list to have credibility with my young friend.

As a start, to achieve this relationship of friend and writer, I followed up by modeling for Josh a list of everyday, personal experiences that I had a genuine interest in writing, careful to include topics on those personally vulnerable subjects, such as the post-partem blues I experienced this year after my son Brian left for Harvard, and on sports, such as the tennis game I shake out of mothballs each May and struggle to perfect by October.

Subsequently, I modeled a list of everyday, commonplace student topics (Nancie Atwell, pp. 99, 100) and asked Josh to

brainstorm a list of twenty topics about which he would like to write. I rehearsed Josh for writing by questioning him for details about nine of these twenty topics, noting to myself that he had sufficient enthusiasm and details to write a personal essay on four of these nine topics we had rehearsed. Even more importantly, I began to feel that Josh and I were developing a sound rapport as well as a mutual respect for each other as writers.

Because I was intrigued with the Pictorial Autobiographical Timeline I recently had discovered, I borrowed from Linda Rief's first day activities and culminated my opening activities with Josh by introducing him to this Pictorial Autobiographical Timeline. I modeled this new concept for Josh with the enthusiasm of a child with a new toy. As Josh chuckled at my symbolic representation of my brother Tom's birth with a drawing of a scrawny chicken, I became more comfortable in my revelation of personal self to a student. When it was Josh's turn to draw his humorous stick figures and title his memories of significant events in his life, I listened intently for each new clue to this boy Josh so that I could ask pertinent questions that would rehearse him for writing each of these events. I judiciously chose to return to the year he had met his tough friend, Shane. I carefully probed, continuing only if Josh volunteered and demonstrated patience to continue. Concrete specifics rolled out of Josh: "mouthy to his parents and teachers," "pretty rude," "fights," "trouble in school and at home," "the drug Ritalin," "the psychologist."

Drafting

Intuiting that Josh had rehearsed for writing sufficiently, I offered Josh the opportunity to write. "You certainly have had enough specific details about this Shane in your life. Do you think you're ready to write about him, or is there another topic you wish to write?" Without any hesitation, Josh responded, "I'm ready to write on Shane." And Josh was into his drafting stage.

Josh created his title as an outgrowth of his rehearsal for writing. The first line he wrote as he began drafting was the title, "My Shane Year." With those first three words on the paper, Josh sat writing his first (and only) draft as if someone had turned on the spiggot and forgot to shut it. He wrote three pages without the slightest hesitation and without any pause to do any additional thinking. I sat in amazement as I watched living proof of how essential and effective the rehearsal stage of writing is. I Observed silently as Josh drafted, thinking what a dynamic night my first session with my writing case student had been.

Teacher Conferencing

The second session I began by modeling for Josh the value of reading his drafts aloud, stopping at each place in my reading to note how I had only determined that each sentence or phrase needed revision because in reading it aloud I had heard that these places were not smooth flowing or I had heard an irritating repetition of the same words several times. I also shared with Josh that reading one's piece aloud was important for the writer to take ownership of his own

piece. Since Josh had taken to writing his piece so effortlessly, I also decided to introduce to Josh the value of orally reading to developing what I term for my students "inner voice" which I have learned in my research readings for this course is akin to Sondra Perl's "felt sense" or as she explains, "the internal criterion writers use to guide them when they are planning, drafting, and revising...a hovering attention to what they experience throughout their bodies." ("Understanding Composing")

As Josh read his draft aloud the first time, he remarked that he heard that he had didn't like his repeated use of the term "ritalin pills." He then revised these places by substituting the words "drug" and "medicine."

At this point I moved into the teacher conferencing stage, pointing out to Josh how clear the overall focus of his piece was and how his piece had a distinct beginning, middle and end to create a clear picture of the difficulties he had experienced during "The Shane Year." I followed by telling him in successive stages of the conferencing that my only questions were "Specifically how did you begin acting more and more like Shane?" "What do you mean by "a hyper pill?" and "What did the psychologist do in your sessions together?" With those simple questions Josh easily provided the concrete details and verbally rehearsed his sentences aloud as he wrote the additions into his piece. I couldn't resist congratulating Josh on his astuteness in interpreting the psychologist's use of playing checkers as a counseling technique to relax him and elicit unrehearsed answers from him.

Next I asked Josh to read his new draft with its additions aloud, instructing him to listen carefully for smooth word and sentence flow. As he did so, Josh's ear discovered a glitch as he stopped to say, "I thought I had heard another repetition when I read it aloud before," and proceeded to read to me, "`I never saw Shane before,'" and "`As I said before, I never saw Shane before.'" With unbridled enthusiasm, I declared, "See how important it is to read your piece aloud during drafting and conferencing. And to think you had never been instructed to do this before tonight. Remember to do this reading aloud during every future writing conference."

Mini Lesson on Leads

In our third session I introduced leads to Josh and modeled four types of leads: a quote, in medias res of an action, writing the ending then proceeding to a flashback, and a description of the dominant character. After introducing and modeling my four leads for Josh, I asked Josh to write three different leads for his piece, "My Shane Year," giving him the choice of which three of the four he could accomplish. After fifteen minutes of thinking and writing Josh read his well-conceived samples of a quote lead, an action lead and a character description lead. I then asked Josh to choose which lead he felt would best gain his reader's interest for his piece.

More Drafting

Carefully guarding my inner preference for his action lead, I listened, after two minutes of deliberation, as Josh chose his character description lead. I next explained to Josh that his leads would need to be incorporated into the beginning of his explanation of Shane, and because of this he would need to craft his words to make a smooth transition from the lead into the explanation of his character. For five minutes I watched attentively as Josh first read his lead then his opening sentence, thought, then reread both before he wrote his transition from lead to story quickly and effortlessly. Suffice to say, Josh had done his thinking before his writing to effect his transition deftly.

Self Conferencing

As Josh proceeded through the content questions writer asks himself/herself on a Content Self Evaluation , I listened as Josh, not me, directed the discussion. "Didn't I use action and description in my piece?" "I've already revised what I said more than once." "Didn't my lead bring the reader right into my piece?" "Isn't my lead all completed?" "What are short, choppy sentences?"

Mini Lesson on Short, Choppy Sentences

Pleased with this barrage of ownership responses from Josh, I now proceeded to model for him the problem short, choppy sentences present to the rhythm of a piece, using extemporaneous examples. Josh related to the arhythmia my short sentences created, and timidly volunteered that he did not think he had any choppy sentences in his piece. When I asked him what was the surest way to tell, he rapidly questioned, "By reading my piece aloud and listening?" Yes, I was pleased with Josh as a process writer, with his internalization of an important factor of the process of writing. As Josh read aloud, I could see his face belying the total concentration of his mind within. "I don't think I have any short, choppy sentences that break up the rhythm," Josh concluded, not yet totally convinced he had ownership of this writing problem. I rescued Josh, validating for him that, indeed, he did have a sound understanding of this writing problem because he had concluded accurately that he did not find this problem in his own writing.

From both Josh's words and his posturings, I intuited that Josh had taken "My Shane Year" through to its final revision. "Josh, is there anything more you feel needs said about your Shane year for your reader to share what you know intimately about this personal experience?" I queried. Josh looked down at the paper then up to me and simply replied, "No."

More Self Conferencing

"Then, would you like to conference with yourself just to review with yourself that everything is included in your writing?" I further queried. "I guess so," Josh half-committed himself.

As I presented a Self Conference Checklist to Josh , I explained each item on the list

proceeding from Questions about Enough Information to Too Much Information, from Questions about Beginnings to Questions about Endings, Title and Style.

While Josh read back and forth from the Self Conference Checklist to his paper, I observed his growing restlessness with the task. Finally, I asked Josh simply, "Are you finished with this piece and you don't know how to tell me?" Josh looked up at me and nodded timidly. Immediately I wanted to let him know that it was okay to decide he was finished with this piece. "Josh, I think you've done a fine job of putting the finishing touches on this piece. Would you like to move on to checking your spelling?" With a sheepish expression of relief, Josh nodded affirmatively.

Spelling Self Edit

I instructed Josh to circle all the words in his piece he felt didn't look right to him. Once this was accomplished I placed my dictionary on the table and asked Josh if he wanted to check his spellings. He accomplished the first word "instigate" easily because he initially had thought the middle vowel was "i", but when he came to the second word, "psychologist," he looked puzzled. "Josh, can I help you?" I volunteered. Josh explained his dilemma, "I can't find anything that says this word in the dictionary."

I explained to Josh one strange way that an "f" sound could be spelled was "phone," which was what he had spelled instead of "psy-." I took a chance and asked Josh if he had ever seen the word "psychedelic." "Yes," he replied he had seen it on friends' tee shirts. I delved further. "Do you remember the strange letters with which it began?" Josh stared off, then queried, "Ps?" "Wonderful," I congratulated him. "Now go back to the dictionary for your word." It was exciting to watch Josh return to the dictionary with relish and eagerly write his word "psychologist" correctly.

Self Editing

Not being Josh's classroom teacher this year, I explained what I considered to be the more sophisticated, unfamiliar terms on a Self Edit Check Sheet: Dialogue, proper nouns, possessive nouns, consistent verb tense. Josh checked off each category as he read, thought and checked through his paper for each editing category. Josh concluded to me that he did not think he had any of these errors.

Teacher Editing

With the Self Editing phase completed, I explained to Josh that when a writer's piece has been through all the writing stages through Self Edit, the writer sends his piece to his publisher to be edited so that he is sure it has no errors when it goes to print for publishing. I explained to Josh that in the classroom the teacher was the final editor for pieces to be published and asked Josh's permission to do a final Teacher Edit for his piece. Josh shrugged his shoulders and handed me his draft. Reading Josh's written words for the first time, I easily read through his piece noting three usage

problems to present to Josh in mini lessons: commas for independent clauses in a series which I paralleled to simple lists in a series, commas to separate city and state and close off the state, no comma preceding a "because clause," and the difference in the functions of a period, semicolon and a colon. I decided to present each of these in mini lesson because I felt each was important for Josh to know at his level of the accurate use of language.

Mini Lesson on Correct Usage

After I presented my mini lesson on commas for independent clauses in a series, I was pleased to note Josh take ownership of his piece and decide that he did not feel the sentence read the way he intended with commas. Josh stated he preferred periods because periods made it "sound the way he wrote it to sound."

Final Copy

At our last session I proudly asked Josh if he felt this was a finished piece and ready for final copy. Josh nodded his head eagerly and confidently replied, "Yes." I then reviewed the format of a final copy with Josh: writing on one side of the paper, margins, neatness, double spacing her copy and my mnemonic aid for placing faint pencil dots on each line on which to write so that he did not have to make messy erasures or rewrite a page. I observed Josh write his final copy, confortable in the knowledge that Josh truly had participated wholeheartedly in every phase of the writing process through to the final copy and had but one stage to complete.

Evaluation

I asked Josh if he had ever participated with his teacher in evaluating his own writing. Josh replied that he hadn't. I explained to Josh that a writer's participation in his/her own evaluation was a final phase of writing I felt important in developing a young writer's writing skills because it was what real writers do all the time. As I handed Josh a Criteria for Effective Writing to be considered in the evaluation of his piece, I explained each criterion as thoroughly as its unfamiliarity in our nightly classes warranted. I then asked Josh to put aside his self-consciousness and allow himself to evaluate his own work for the first time. I observed Josh deliberating as he proceeded down the Self Evaluation list. When he handed me his completed evaluation, I covered his evaluations as I compiled my own evaluations. At the completion I verbally weighed Josh's evaluations to mine, sharing with Josh how I had arrived at my evaluations and asking him how he had arrived at his. I next averaged our two grades to create the final grade for each writing criterion and the final grade for the piece. Josh was visibly pleased with his accomplishments. "I never earned an A in writing before this piece."

I asked Josh if he wanted to share this piece with Mom. He acquiesced readily. We walked to his house, and Josh read to his mother "My Shane Year." Afterward, in private, his mom expressed to

me her surprise at his volunteering to write on such an unpleasant and painful episode in his life. She concluded that, through my "benevolent coaching," he must have "bought into" this natural learning and process writing totally. She additionally concluded that Josh's comfort in sharing this painful topic was a testament in itself to the effectiveness of the natural learning process in which the teacher comes down to the level of an equal partner in the process of learning with the student, validating what he can do rather than pointing out his errors

Mini Lesson on Reading Journal Writing

I asked Josh if there was anything with which I could help him in his classroom reading/writing process workshop. He pleasantly surprised me by admitting that he never knew what he was supposed to write about in his reading journal to his journal partner, that they each ended up writing of their routine, daily activities to each other, such as, "Stacey went out of her way to be nice to me today."

I began explaining to Josh how the different aspects of character, author's style and plot can affect and relate to a reader's life. I took examples of Piggy and Ralph and Simon from the book, LORD OF THE FLIES (new version) that he was reading and began modeling how I would write on how each character did and did not relate to me. Next I modeled for Josh Jonathon's journal writing on JACOB HAVE I LOVED (Maureen White). After modeling I engaged Josh in a discussion to validate what he had gleaned about journal writing from the example. Josh admitted that he was beginning to see journal writing better. I feel that with a strong writing teacher next year Josh will be able to write his reading journal entries as well as he crafted "My Shane Year" during our case study.

Strengths

In the process of his writing "The Shane Year," Josh demonstrated all of Donald Murray's "Qualities of Good Writing." Josh felt so strongly about his growth from a hyperactive, underachiever middle school follower to a self-assertive student with sufficient purpose and focus that I readily could identify that his content in "My Shane Year" contained sufficient strong Meaning to make this an effective piece of writing.

Josh demonstrated Authority in this piece. He documented specific, accurate, honest information that only Josh knew intimately in describing his Shane year. He, in fact, made himself vulnerable in risking to reveal so much of himself so honestly. After he had read his piece to his mother, she remarked to me how surprised she was that Josh would choose this subject to write, that never before had Josh volunteered to discuss this subject with even his family. I believe Josh had matured sufficiently in the last two years and he was strong enough in his new self esteem that he could reach deeply into his recesses and allow himself to deal with it finally.

Josh's Shane year was marked by his own individual Voice that readily identified that indeed Josh and no one else was writing this piece.

Josh wrote sufficient information about his Shane year to

demonstrate that his piece had effective Development in it without overwriting and wordiness.

Josh's Design for this piece was deftly organized to move quickly through carefully-selected information, to explain succinctly the change he had experienced that year, to a strong conclusion that gave the piece a sense of completion. He returned a successive evening of drafting to the sentence he had left unfinished in midstream as I had instructed him as a means to refresh his memory when he returned to drafting. That successive evening of drafting Josh picked up his pencil and said, "I have just a little more to write," and set to writing the concluding ten lines to his piece with the confidence that he knew exactly where this piece was going. And indeed he did.

Josh successfully established the clarity of this piece. He chose the exact right words and wrote simply and forthrightly with such Clarity that the reader clearly understands what "My Shane Year" was like.

Weaknesses

In this isolated period of eight evening sessions in which I worked with Josh on this one isolated piece, "My Shane Year," I have found no weaknesses in Josh's writing nor his approach nor responsibility to the process of writing. Josh responded well to the stimulus of an isolated tutoring project outside his regular classroom.

Recommendations

Because Josh responded so well to the stimulus of the isolated tutoring project, I found no specific areas of the writing process about which Josh needed to know more. In fact, I was impressed that this seventh grader had such a strong grasp of the writing process to which he had been introduced for the first time only this school year. I was equally impressed that Josh had such a strong command of language usage and mechanics to write his ideas so effectively.

The only recommendations I verbalized to Josh were one, to do a considerable amount of verbal rehearsing before future writings and two, to remember to read all of his pieces aloud in future conferencing with students and teachers to develop his inner voice and his ear for the sound of writing as well as to establish ownership of his piece. These were four new concepts of process writing that Josh had learned in this writing project. I would also have liked to recommend to Josh to participate in evaluating his writing with his teachers but that is not a factor that is within Josh's control. Only his teacher controls whether Josh will participate in evaluating his future writings.

By providing large blocks of Writing Time, by transferring the Ownership of this piece squarely to Josh so that I did not authoritarianly suggest how he write it or, worse yet, tell him what to write, and by providing sensitive, probing, and validating Response to

Josh in his his writing process, as well as Modeling each new writing concept I introduced with my own personal writing, Josh had written a sensitive, well-developed reflective essay in his own personal voice. TIME, OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSE (Nancie Atwell, 1987): These are the key ingredients when set in a natural learning environment for teaching Process Writing which is so vital to teaching our students how to think critically so they can write effectively.

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Holly, a fourth grader, was considerably different from Josh in two ways: Holly was a dedicated, conscientious student who thrived on reading books and doing school work. Secondly, Holly had no exposure to process writing in her regular classroom. She was merely asked to write a story twice through the term. The challenge that Holly presented was to activate the creative and original thinking in her because Holly thrived on rote drill work. From her demeanor I also concluded that it would be difficult to elicit Holly's own personal opinions and preferences from her because she was too eager to do anything the teacher asked without concern for her own likes and dislikes. This student was to be my bigger challenge of the two. With Holly I needed to instill the spark of imagination not just facilitate a grasp of the writing process. Moreover, Mom had cautioned me that Holly was extremely shy. Another aspect to this complex little girl with whom I had only superficial previous contact.

Logistically, Holly also presented more challenge than Josh because Holly had Little League practice every night until 8:15 p.m. and Mom wanted her in bed at 8:45 p.m. Additionally, I was concerned that the stimulation of baseball games and practice would be a difficult activity with which this writing project would have to compete. Thus, with less time to work nightly and more new concepts to present, I began the second part of my writing study.

Exploring Interests and Rehearsal for Writing

The first day I began with the Interest Inventory borrowed from Maureen White to create my profile of Holly. From querying Holly why she chose to read such personal crisis novels, such as WHY DID SHE HAVE TO DIE, MOTHER PLEASE DON'T DIE, and I WANT TO LIVE, I learned that Holly had Cystic Fibrosis and had been advised she would not live beyond the nineteenth year. From this fact I easily concluded why Holly was intense about living her life now and equally intense about learning all she could in school. I also concluded that I would need to be ever so sensitive in my questioning of Holly during this writing project.

In modeling my own list of writing topics for Holly, I was careful to include light personal crisis topics such as the post-partem blues I experienced this year after our son Brian left for Harvard and how I overcame my depression. From Holly's inventory I knew that I needed to demonstrate for her that it was natural to write on painful, personal topics but I was cautious also to keep those

personal topics I modeled on the lighter rather than the morbid side for Holly.

I introduced to Holly Linda Rief's Pictorial Autobiographical Timeline and modeled my own Timeline for her, redrawing my scrawny chicken for my brother Tom's birth and the smiling, big-eared chubby baby for my brother Jim's birth. Then I asked Holly if she would like to create her own Pictorial Autobiographical Timeline. As I suspected, she shrugged her shoulders and offered a meek, "I guess so."

Holly carefully drew each event on her timeline, self-effacingly apologizing for her inability to think of clever pictographs for the events. Quickly assessing her uninspired timeline of events, I interpreted Holly's cry for help and immediately began her rehearsal for writing by questioning her about the two most inspired topics, being in THE NUTCRACKER (the play) and participating in her first track meet last week. Even after progressive pertinent questioning Holly could only make mundane, generalized statements about her part in THE NUTCRACKER. The track meet possibility of writing quickly dissipated when I learned she was disillusioned with track meets because she and her school team did very poorly in the meet.

I decided it was time to try a completely new tack with Holly and asked her to list twenty topics about which she could write, showing her Nancie Atwell's list of everyday topics to write for stimulation (pp. 99, 100). When she finished her list, I avoided the topics she had done for school reports and immediately gravitated to the two topics involving many people and excitement, "This Christmas" and "2nd Trip to Florida." After a session of posing pertinent questions on "This Christmas," I decided that was not a topic that sparked any excitement for Holly. I moved on to "2nd trip to Florida" which had freshly occurred one week ago. I approached Holly; "Would you like to write on your "2nd Florida Trip?" "Okay," Holly replied in her usual docile manner.

Semantic Webbing

With the knowledge that she had traveled to Disney World and all the bastions of children's delight in Florida, I asked Holly if she knew what story mapping was. To my delight, Holly replied affirmatively. I explained that this was a brainstorming technique to be done prior to writing and that it was also referred to as Semantic Webbing. To determine if I needed to do any modeling of semantic webbing for Holly, I asked her to begin making her webbing for her Florida vacation. As she put her webbing center and successive topical offshoots on paper, I was satisfied that Holly understood this concept.

Rehearsal for Writing

After Holly had completed her webbing, I rehearsed her for writing this topic by questioning her about the details of each of the fourteen topical offshoots she had written in her semantic webbing. Even after progressive pertinent questioning on each item, Holly again could only give mundane, generalized statements about each of the

events in her Florida trip.

More Semantic Webbing

Momentarily reassessing my options for motivating Holly to write and successfully rehearsing her for writing, I turned to her list of twenty topics once again. "Holly," I began, "you don't seem to have much to say about your Florida trip. Why don't you look at your topics list again and see if you want to write about any other topic." Again meekly, Holly shrugged her shoulders and said, "Okay." After thinking and perusing a few moments Holly replied, "I could write on Season. She's my best friend."

More Semantic Webbing

With "She's been my best friend since I was two and a half," I asked Holly to make a semantic webbing for every reason why she likes Season above everyone else as her best friend, every facet of her personality that Holly liked and disliked. Holly carefully alternated her colored pencils in brainstorming Season to create a colorful explosion of ideas on her paper. This time, as I progressed through pertinent questioning to validate what Holly knew to write on this topic from her brainstorming items, Holly still methodically but more concretely detailed specifics and vivid incidences about her best friend, Season.

More Rehearsal for Writing

I rehearsed Holly through their coincidental meeting in the driveway to Season being touchy about her friends touching anything in her room to their always fighting but her Season always being the first one to apologize so that they don't stay angry and all the other twelve items in her semantic webbing. After I had sufficiently probed all fifteen brainstorming items, I asked Holly, "Would you like to begin writing about your best friend, Season?" Again typically, Holly shyly and unassuredly replied, "Okay."

Drafting

At last I was comfortable that Holly was ready to write although from all the past sessions I still had my reservations that she would be able to draft successfully this piece on Season. I observed as Holly first perused her brainstorming and then selectively eliminated three of her fifteen brainstorming items. With this accomplished, she wrote about each item in clockwise progression around her webbing circle, effecting no other organization as she drafted these ideas but to write of them methodically in the order they appeared around her webbing circle until she had finished writing all the items.

Teacher Conferencing

Because Holly had difficulty rehearsing concrete details and vivid images of her topics, I decided I would offer her a teacher conference before a self conference. Again typically, Holly shyly and

docilely acquiesced. I then explained to Holly the benefit of reading her piece aloud to her conferencing partner, to develop her ear for the sound of writing and develop her inner voice. I especially emphasized the benefit of taking ownership of her piece for Holly this shy, docile student too willing to give up ownership to an autocratic teacher.

As Holly read and I listened, I heard several places I wanted to know more specifics. I first congratulated Holly on establishing Season as a living person I felt I was beginning to know and told her I especially liked the way she showed her readers the very sound that Season uttered, "Ribbit." Then I explained that there were a few places I needed to know more specifics to understand fully the situation she was illustrating. "Holly, when you were illustrating that sometimes Season could be mean, what specifically did Season mean when she replied, `At least I don't have this' or `At least I don't have that?'" Holly sat pensively and finally replied, "She would say things like, `At least I don't have a mean stepfather,' or, `At least I can do my own hair.'" I quickly validated her understanding with, "That's the kind of specifics we need in writing, Holly."

I continued, "Holly, farther on you tell me that you're more stubborn than Season, but I need you to show your reader not tell your reader how you are more stubborn in a specific instance." Again, Holly sat pensively for a moment, then replied, "Because she apologizes and I don't like when we make chocolate chip cookies and I argue we put in too much flour and she argues we put in too much chips." I again quickly replied, "Good, Holly, you are learning to show me not just tell me."

"Now, tell me some specific details about why she makes you laugh. Holly." Here Holly resorted to her typical shrug of the shoulders and replied, "For instance, she would make a weird face but it would be funny."

"Holly, I can't see that weird face. Show me in words what kind of a face she makes or in what specific instances she makes this weird face," I probed deeper to force Holly to reach deeper inside her storehouse of language.

"Usually she makes a face out of the blue at a comment, such as, her parents say they are having something terrible for supper."

Forcing Holly to reach still deeper, I continued, "Holly, you're telling me `something terrible for supper' but I can't see it. Find specific words to show what specific kind of a terrible dinner would cause Season to make such a funny face to make you giggle so."

Holly withdrew into herself for what seemed the longest time, then her face lighted and she responded, "When her parents say they are having Turkey Tetrazzini for supper."

"Wonderful, Holly. You have thought of not only an example of what a child would consider a terrible supper, but also thought of an example that sounds comical to match the comical face Season makes, using words that surprise and entertain your reader. You crafted a comical-sounding word chain with a wonderful musical rhythm that sets the tone for the comical situation about which you are writing. We writers need to think deeply and create this magic in writing for our readers more often." I paused to allow Holly to

digest what I had said. Then, after sufficient pause, continued, "How did you ever come up with Turkey Tetrazzini? Is that one of the meals that her mother makes often?"

For the first time Holly replied without hesitation, "No, they used to serve that to me all the time in the hospital when I was there for that long time." With that reply I was confident that Holly had freed her imagination, at least this one time, to allow herself to select details from extraneous experiences to concretely convey details of totally unrelated events.

With persistent questioning, Holly had unleashed the "Turkey Tetrazzini" in her student writing, and I was exhilarated to have played a small part in her discovery of the magic in crafting language for one's writing. I felt confident that if this shy, self-effacing, teacher-directed child could unleash her "Turkey Tetrazzini" once, she could do it a second, a third, and a fourth time until she developed her own automaticity for this writing process of crafting word surprises to delight her readers.

As I proceeded to the next places that Holly needed to clarify in her piece, I observed that Holly was already more facile in thinking and crafting words to detail these concrete details and specific images for her readers: "Season likes Sweet Valley Twin books and I like personal tragedy books." "She isn't nerdy weird, but funny weird."

Mini Lesson on Leads

With such motivation to continue guiding Holly through the writing process, I introduced leads to her and modeled four types of leads: a quote, in medias res of an action, writing the ending then proceeding to a flashback (being careful to explain flashback), and a description of the dominant character. After introducing and modeling my four leads for Holly, I asked Holly to write three different leads for her piece on Season, giving her the choice of which three types of the four she would choose to write. After a short time of thinking and writing, I invited Holly to read her description-of-the-character lead, her quote lead, and her in-medias-res-of-an-action lead. After I congratulated Holly on writing such interest-piquing leads, I next asked her to choose the one lead she felt would best pique her reader's interest to read about her best friend, Season.

More Drafting

Cautious not to bely my choice to Holly through any nuance of facial expression, I listened, after a few minutes of decision, as Holly chose her quote lead. "Good choice," I commended her. I next explained to Holly that her lead would need to be fitted smoothly into her first meeting Season. Because of this need to fit these pieces together, I explained she would need to craft her words to make a smooth transition from her lead into her meeting Season. Holly took only a few minutes of reading each piece to fit together to decide that she simply would use her quote lead as her opening paragraph then proceed to create a new paragraph to detail her first meeting Season. Holly had successfully used strategy to eliminate the necessity for crafting additional words to effect a smooth transition. I had observed Holly thinking and planning before she wrote.

Self Conferencing

With Holly's emerging control of her writing process, I proceeded to introduce the Content concepts on the Content Self Evaluation I handed her (Marge Wilkinson, Example A). I sat unobtrusively as Holly conferenced with herself through the guide sheet, reading from the sheet to her paper as she progressed down the list, making no revisions to her writing. When she finished, I asked her is she needed to make any revisions or additions, and she again regressed to her shrugging and replied, "No."

Spelling Self Edit

I next instructed Holly to circle all the words in her piece that didn't look correct to her or she questioned. Instead of asking Holly to check these in the dictionary, because they were commonplace fourth grade misspellings, I proceeded to see if Holly actually knew these spellings but merely had been writing too fast to spell them correctly. I began with "coments" and Holly responded, "That has to be a double m, doesn't it?" I continued with "usualy," to which Holly replied, "I always spell that wrong. It has a double l." Holly had immediate recognition and correction of her error in "realy," as well. She additionally self-corrected "too" for "to," "you're" for "your," and "apologizes" for "appologizes."

I spent more time with "diffrences" and "sarcasticly" to pronounce the words for her, ask her how many syllables she heard versus how many syllables she had written in her word, and then ask to self-correct the spellings. Likewise, I took time to teach her the mnemonic aid for spelling "separate" correctly, that it always had to have "par" for the course in its center. For "arguement" I simply taught her that it followed the final e rule just as bake did to become baking. In proceeding to "lead" (past tense), I discovered that Holly had no sight word visual memory for "led" so I patterned some similar verb present/past tense conjugations like "speed" and "lead" in contrast to her most familiar similarly spelled verb, "read." With "due" for "hairdo" I simply illustrated the homonyms with their respective meanings and spellings.

Self Editing

Since Holly was only in fourth grade, I skipped the self editing phase because I was unsure of just how much training in practical grammar and usage she had received in a school that I knew focused all its energies on basal reading and worksheets and very little on language usage for writing.

Teacher Editing

I then proceeded to explain to Holly that when an author's piece was written to his/her satisfaction, the author sent his piece to his publisher to be edited so that the author was sure it had no errors when it went to print for publishing. I further explained to Holly that in the classroom the teacher was the final editor for pieces to be published and asked Holly's permission to do a final

Teacher Edit for her piece. Holly shyly said her typical, "Okay." Reading Holly's piece for the first time, I was careful to discriminate which errors I would mini lesson with her and which minor ones or sophisticated ones I would ignore so that I did not overwhelm her and thwart her desire to write.

Mini Lesson on Correct Usage

I decided to present mini lessons on run-ons, and-and sentences, quotation marks for direct quotes, a comma to delineate those quotations from the speaker-explanatory phrase, semicolons in certain series of facts, and the function of colons. Holly sufficiently learned the usage concepts to self-correct her piece. But, with this isolated contact, I do not know how much of this correct usage she will retain over time.

Final Copy

At our second last session I proudly shared with Holly that she successfully had completed all phases of the writing process and was ready to write her final copy. I instructed her in the format of a final copy: writing on one side of the paper, margins, neatness, double spacing her copy and my mnemonic aid for placing faint pencil dots on each line on which to write so that she did not have to make messy erasures or rewrite a page. I observed Holly write the first page of her final copy then sent her home as it was her bedtime. I instructed her to finish her final copy over the weekend, but to be sure to bring both her draft and final copy to our last session.

Evaluation

At our last session I asked Holly if she had ever participated with her teacher in evaluating her own writing. Holly meekly replied that she hadn't. I explained to Holly that participating in evaluating her own writing was a final phase of writing I felt important in developing a young writer's writing skills. As I handed Holly the Criteria for Effective Writing (Linda Rief, Example D) to be considered in the evaluation of her piece, I explained each criterion thoroughly since Holly was only in fourth grade and also a novice to process writing. I then asked Holly to forget her self-consciousness about grading herself and allow herself to evaluate her own work for the first time. I observed Holly concentrating earnestly as she proceeded down the Self Evaluation list. When she handed me the completed evaluation, I covered her evaluations as I composed my own evaluations. At the completion of my evaluation I verbally compared Holly's evaluations to mine, sharing with Holly how I had arrived at my evaluations and asking her how she had arrived at hers. I next averaged our two grades to create the final grade for each writing criterion and the final grade for the piece. Not to my surprise the majority of meek, self-effacing Holly's grades were a grade lower than my grades. As it was almost her bedtime, I asked Holly if she wanted to share this piece with Mom. Knowing her closeness to her mother, I surmised the answer before she volunteered it, and we hurried to her house for her to read this piece to Mom which Holly had entitled

simply, "Season." In private Mom shared with me she was surprised that Holly had not written on the morbid subjects of personal tragedy around which her reading revolves.

Strengths

In the process of her writing "Season," Holly had learned a great many new concepts about writing in general and the writing process in specific. She may not have mastered all of Donald Murray's "Qualities of Good Writing" but Holly had demonstrated that her writing successfully contained a few of these qualities. For one, Holly had satisfied me that she had sufficient content in her "Season" to create strong Meaning in her piece.

Holly also demonstrated Authority in "Season." She documented specific, accurate, honest information that only Holly knew intimately in describing why Season was her best friend.

Holly's "Season" was marked by her own individual Voice that identified that, in fact, Holly and no one else could be writing this piece.

Weaknesses

Holly, with time and a sensitive writing guide and facilitator, will develop the other qualities of good writing. She will learn to provide sufficient information on her topic without overwriting and wordiness or underwriting her topic in her Development of her subject.

I am confident also that Holly under the right nurturing will learn to organize herself to write carefully-chosen information, to explain herself succinctly not only to write a strong beginning but also a supportive middle, then to craft a strong conclusion to her piece so she demonstrates that she has mastered Development. I had decided that Holly had assimilated enough new information about this entirely new concept of process writing as well as completely new techniques of writing in this project. I arbitrarily decided not to overwhelm her with creating a strong conclusion for her piece. I felt that she could remain a bed-to-bed story writer until a classroom teacher of writing could guide her to writing more mature beginnings, middles and conclusions in her pieces. In a half-hour before bedtime, after a long day of school and baseball practice, was not the time for Holly to attempt restructuring her basic style of writing. That will all come in due time, given she has a skilled, enthusiastic process writing teacher.

With that same devoted nurturing Holly will develop Clarity in knowing how to choose and craft the exact right word chains so that her reader clearly understands what it is she is relating about her topic.

Recommendations

To reiterate, in due time Holly has the potential to blossom as a writer, given she has a series of skilled, enthusiastic process writing teachers in the near future.

By providing large blocks of Rehearsing for Writing and Writing Time, by transferring Ownership of "Season" squarely to Holly so that I did not put my writing ideas into her head, by Conferencing patiently using sensitive, probing and validating Response to Holly in her writing process, as well as modeling each new writing concept I introduced with my own personal writing, Holly had experienced and had been nurtured by Process Writing in a Natural Learning Environment for the first time. TIME, OWNERSHIP, AND RESPONSE (Nancie Atwell, 1987): even the first time a student experiences these key ingredients, they free her to think and grow through a natural learning process as opposed to the traditional teaching method by the all-knowing teacher who imparts rote learning to a passive student receptor. All students deserve to learn to think and write critically through Process Writing in a Natural Learning Environment, an environment in which the teacher retreats to the role of co-learner and facilitator who consistently validates what the student does know instead of simply pointing out his errors to be corrected. With the Natural Learning Process we allow that student to take control of and, therefore, become excited about his own learning. This personal involvement and excitement about his learning will induce that student to return to class saying, "Writing is fun. I want to write more," instead of believing writing is the drudgery most students now think it is.

This model I used for teaching Process Writing in a Natural Learning Environment can be transposed into the regular classroom without any major alterations. This model, which involved one and half hours from Rehearsal for Writing stage to Final Evaluation stage for Josh and two hours for Holly, can readily be accomplished in the classroom in a week and a half while conferencing with all students for ten minutes at a time through each class period. The implementation of peer conferencing would reduce the classtime even further. The end result is a class of students who not only enjoy writing, but also have 1) the strategies necessary to accomplish the writing process on their own and 2) the strategies necessary to do the critical thinking necessary to accomplish this most difficult of intellectual processes, writing.

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